NO 289 JULY 35¢
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
BAT MAN
A SPINE-CHILLING SHOCKER! "SIGN OF THE SKULL!"
Mike Grell

GREEN LANTERN
HAL JORDAN ALIAS GREEN LANTERN
"HALF THE PEOPLE HERE..."
EVERYONE'S HALF GONE! SOMEBODY'S GOTTA BE HALF JOKING!
THE HALFBACK HAS ONLY HALF A BACK!
"SPINDLY" KLUTZ SPEAKING. THE GAME HAS JUST STARTED BUT IT'S HALF OVER ALREADY!
AS A KID, THEY'D LET ME PLAY FOOTBALL ONLY HALF THE TIME-- I WAS SO ROTTEN!
IT DROVE ME HALF MAD!
NOW MY REVENGE -- MY POWER TO MAKE YOU ALL HALF DISAPPEAR, YOU HALF-BAKED FINKS.
HALF OF HAL JORDAN STEPS INTO A PLACE OF SECLUSION AND...
NOT HALF A SECOND TO WASTE.
I'LL USE MY RING TO HALF CHANGE INTO GREEN LANTERN!
I'VE AN IDEA THAT'S NOT HALF BAD.
I'LL NEED YOUR HELP, MIKE.
HAVE HALF A DELICIOUS HOSTESS® TWINKIES® CAKES.
HALF-WAY MEASURES AGAIN! I WANT IT ALL!!!! THE WHOLE GOLDEN SPONGE CAKE WITH CREAMED FILLING OR NOTHING!!
ONLY IF YOU MAKE HALF OF THE PEOPLE REAPPEAR YOU SPINDLY KLUTZ. AND MAYBE I'LL RELEASE MY HALF NELSON ON YOU.
THEN MAYBE YOU'LL ONLY HAVE TO SERVE HALF YOUR SENTENCE.
GLAD TO HAVE THE OTHER HALF OF MY BACK, BACK AGAIN!
I WAS ONLY HALF-JOKING.
YAAAY TWINKIES CAKES! THEY'RE ALL THERE!
Twinkies
CREAMED FILLING
CAKE
HOSTESS
Twinkies
CREAMED FILLING
56
YOU GET A BIG DELIGHT IN EVERY BITE OF HOSTESS® TWINKIES® CAKES

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FINALLY, BATMAN--A FATAL MISTAKE!
ONCE TOO OFTEN YOU MEDDLED WITH THINGS BEYOND YOUR UNDERSTANDING --AND YOUR PENALTY WILL BE THE STRANGEST ANYONE EVER PAID!
ORPHANED AS A CHILD WHEN A GUNMAN MURDERED HIS PARENTS, BRUCE WAYNE TRAINED HIMSELF TO WAGE RELENTLESS WAR AGAINST CRIME. MASQUERADING BY DAY AS A MILLIONAIRE-MAN-ABOUT-TOWN, HE PROWLS THE NIGHT TO PREY ON THE VERMIN OF THE UNDERWORLD AS THE DREAD...
BAT MAN
SIGN OF THE SKULL
GET READY TO GET SHOOK UP-- AND SHARE THE BIZARRE FATE OF THE BATMAN AS HE MEETS THE WEIRDEST OF THE WEIRD--A MALEVOLENT VISIONARY WHOSE LIFESTYLE WAS HALF-VULTURE, HALF-VAMPIRE... IN--
DAVID V. REED -WRITER-
MIKE GRELL & VINCE COLLETTA -ARTISTS-
JERRY SERPE -COLORIST-

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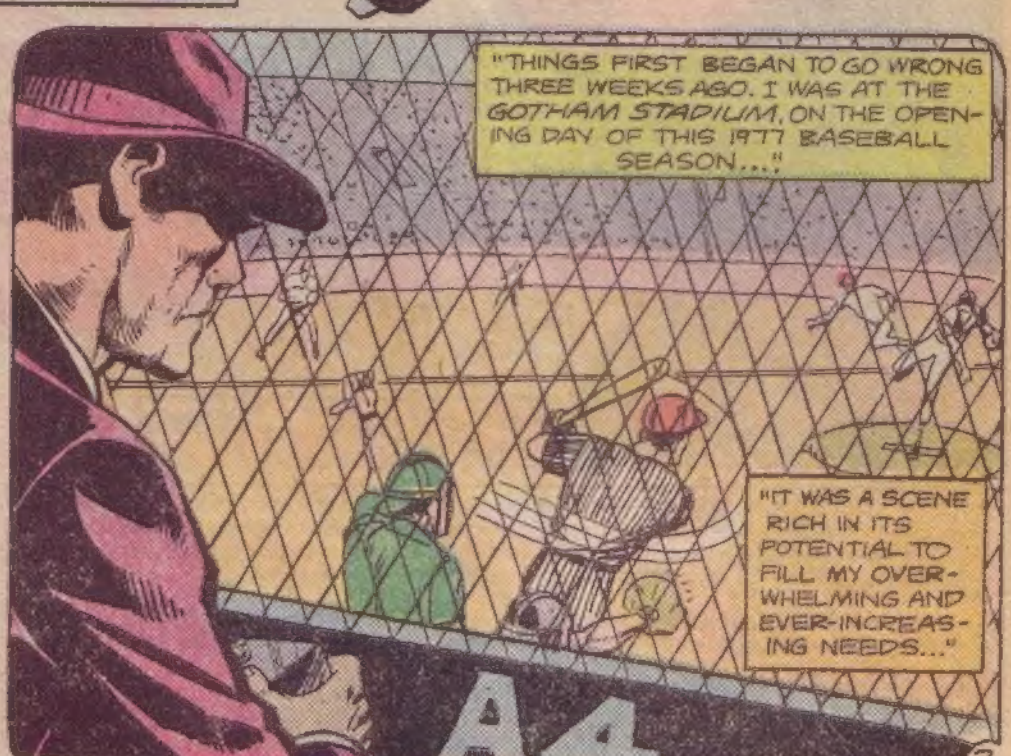
INTRODUCING ONE OF THE MOST WRETCHED, RUTHLESS AND DEADLY MEN WHO EVER MET IN MORTAL COMBAT WITH THE BATMAN!
"MY NAME IS COSMO DUGGER... AND THAT, COMBINED WITH MY PRODIGIOUS INTELLECT, MADE IT INEVITABLE, I SUPPOSE, THAT I WOULD BE KNOWN BY MY FEW FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES AS SKULL DUGGER..."

"YEARS AGO, I FELL VICTIM TO A MORBID PSYCHOLOGICAL AFFLICTION CALLED ANHEDONIA--THE INCAPACITY TO EXPERIENCE JOY--AGAINST WHICH MEDICAL SCIENCE REMAINS POWERLESS..."
"FOR A DECADE I SOUGHT A CURE...AND IN THAT TIME I HAVE BECOME THE GREATEST MEDICAL RESEARCH GENIUS OF CENTURY!"

"THE CURE IS STILL BEYOND ME... BUT IN THE PROCESS, I HAVE EVOLVED AN EXTRAORDINARY--AND FOR SOME, PERHAPS HERETICAL, EVEN MONSTROUS--FORM OF TREATMENT..."
"IT WORKED WELL ENOUGH UNTIL RECENTLY ... WHEN MATTERS TOOK A DIRE AND OMINOUS TURN!"

"NOW MY VERY LIFE SEEMS IN JEOPARDY!! AND SO, ON THIS RECOGITO--ONE OF MY MANY INVENTIONS--I AM RECORDING MY THOUGHTS...TO INSURE THAT, WHATEVER HAPPENS, MY ACHIEVEMENTS WILL ONE DAY EARN THE LAURELS OF THE SCIENTIFIC WORLD..."


"THINGS FIRST BEGAN TO GO WRONG THREE WEEKS AGO. I WAS AT THE GOTHAM STADIUM, ON THE OPENING DAY OF THIS 1977 BASEBALL SEASON..."
"IT WAS A SCENE RICH IN ITS POTENTIAL TO FILL MY OVERWHELMING AND EVER-INCREASING NEEDS..."

"IN THE SECOND INNING, THE HOME TEAM'S PRIZE YOUNG ROOKIE, LANCE LAYTON, CAME TO BAT FOR HIS FIRST TIME IN A MAJOR LEAGUE GAME. ON HIS VERY FIRST SWING--"
IT'S A HOMER!
"ALL AROUND ME THERE WAS BOUNDLESS JOY AS LAYTON CIRCLED THE BASES...BUT MY CONCENTRATION WAS ON THE ONE WHOSE JOY WAS GREATEST OF ALL!"
"MY ELECTRAVOSCOPE WAS READY... AND JUST AS LAYTON WAS ABOUT TO STEP ON HOME PLATE, MY PENCIL-THIN BEAM MADE CONTACT!"
"A MOMENT LATER... UNACCOUNTABLY... HE SUDDENLY STUMBLED... STARTED TO FALL--"
"HE WAS DEAD!"
"I HURRIED OUT OF THE STADIUM...AWAY FROM A SHOCKED AND ANGUISHED SEA OF HUMANITY..."
EXIT
"...THINKING ONLY OF THE JOY I HAD CAPTURED--STOLEN--AND STORED AWAY!"
"THE DEATH WAS ASCRIBED TO A HEART ATTACK... BUT THE REALITY WAS THAT NO ONE FATHOMED WHAT HAD HAPPENED... NOT EVEN I... WHO HAD SOMEHOW CAUSED IT..."
"...UNLESS--WAS IT POSSIBLE?--IT HAD ALL BEEN A TERRIBLE COINCIDENCE... AN ACCIDENT..."

"TEN DAYS PASSED BEFORE I DARED MAKE MY NEXT FORAY... THIS TIME AT THE FILM CRITICS' ANNUAL GOLDEN MASQUE AWARDS..."
"AS THE EVENING WORE ON, THERE WERE SEVERAL TRULY BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS I COULD HAVE SEIZED..."
"BUT I BIDED MY TIME... WAITING FOR THE TOP--AND CLIMACTIC--ACTING AWARD..."
AND THE WINNER IS-- MICHAEL FORRESTER!
"FORRESTER!--THE BELOVED VETERAN ACTOR--NOMINATED FOUR TIMES--AND NOW FINALLY A WINNER!"
"THEY GAVE HIM A STANDING OVATION... AND AS HE ACCEPTED THE AWARD--HIS FACE SUFFUSED WITH IMMEASURABLE JOY..."
"--THAT WAS MY CHOSEN MOMENT!"
"NEXT INSTANT--"
"--MICHAEL FORRESTER DROPPED DEAD!"
"AGAIN--WHATEVER THE ACTUAL CAUSE OF DEATH--IT WENT UNDETECTED! BUT TODAY... WAS... THE THIRD TIME..."
"AND NOW, SINCE I CANNOT STOP--FOR LIFE WITHOUT JOY IS NOT WORTH LIVING-- I MUST FIND OUT WHAT HAS GONE WRONG!"

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

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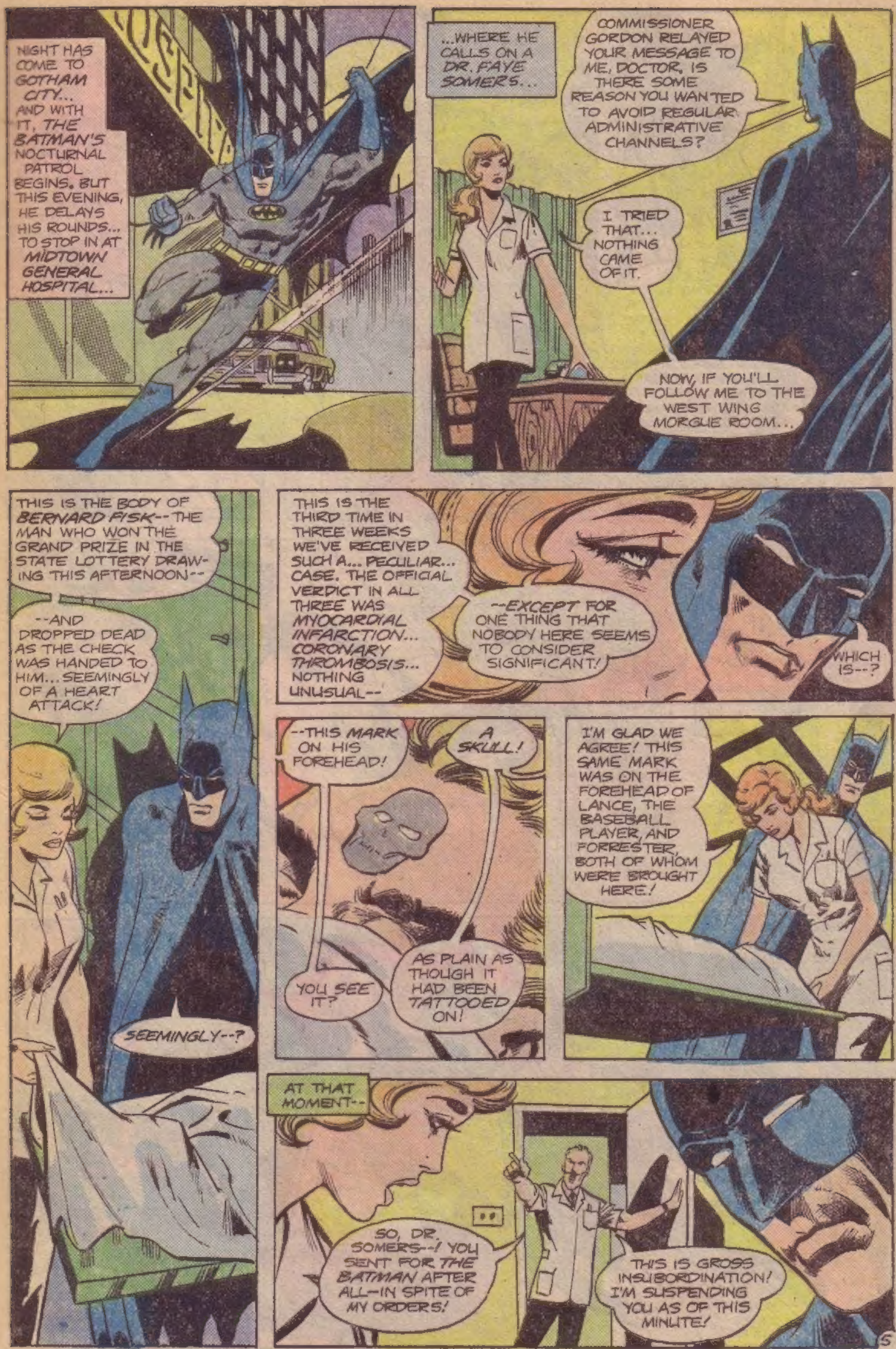
NIGHT HAS COME TO GOTHAM CITY... AND WITH IT, THE BATMAN'S NOCTURNAL PATROL BEGINS. BUT THIS EVENING, HE DELAYS HIS ROUNDS... TO STOP IN AT MIDTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL...
...WHERE HE CALLS ON A DR. FAYE SOMERS...
COMMISSIONER GORDON RELAYED YOUR MESSAGE TO ME, DOCTOR, IS THERE SOME REASON YOU WANTED TO AVOID REGULAR ADMINISTRATIVE CHANNELS?
I TRIED THAT... NOTHING CAME OF IT.
NOW, IF YOU'LL FOLLOW ME TO THE WEST WING MORGUE ROOM...
THIS IS THE BODY OF BERNARD FISK--THE MAN WHO WON THE GRAND PRIZE IN THE STATE LOTTERY DRAWING THIS AFTERNOON--
--AND DROPPED DEAD AS THE CHECK WAS HANDED TO HIM... SEEMINGLY OF A HEART ATTACK!
SEEMINGLY--?
THIS IS THE THIRD TIME IN THREE WEEKS WE'VE RECEIVED SUCH A... PECULIAR... CASE. THE OFFICIAL VERDICT IN ALL THREE WAS MYOCARDIAL INFARCTION... CORONARY THROMBOSIS... NOTHING UNUSUAL--
--EXCEPT FOR ONE THING THAT NOBODY HERE SEEMS TO CONSIDER SIGNIFICANT!
WHICH IS--?
--THIS MARK ON HIS FOREHEAD!
A SKULL!
YOU SEE IT?
AS PLAIN AS THOUGH IT HAD BEEN TATTOOED ON!
I'M GLAD WE AGREE! THIS SAME MARK WAS ON THE FOREHEAD OF LANCE, THE BASEBALL PLAYER, AND FORRESTER, BOTH OF WHOM WERE BROUGHT HERE!
AT THAT MOMENT--
SO, DR. SOMERS--! YOU SENT FOR THE BATMAN AFTER ALL--IN SPITE OF MY ORDERS!
THIS IS GROSS INSUBORDINATION! I'M SUSPENDING YOU AS OF THIS MINUTE!

HOLD ON, DOCTOR--
EST WING
THERE'S NOTHING HERE THAT REQUIRES YOUR ATTENTION, BATMAN! I STRONGLY RESENT ANY IMPLICATIONS THAT OUR STAFF IS REMISS IN ITS PERFORMANCE!
MOREOVER, I WON'T HAVE INEXPERIENCED RESIDENTS STARTING CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS HERE!
BUT AREN'T YOU AT ALL CURIOUS ABOUT THE STRANGE SKULL MARK ON THE CORPSE--?
SUPERFICIAL CAPILLARY DAMAGE! ORDINARY CONTUSIONS PROBABLY SUSTAINED WHEN THEY FELL... TRANSFORMED BY A DANGEROUSLY FERTILE IMAGINATION!
SUDDENLY--
BATMAN! THREE MEN--STEALING THE BODY--HEADING FOR THE AMBULANCE ENTRANCE!
THAT WAY--THROUGH SURGERY FIVE!
I KNOW THE LAYOUT!
DOWN THE CORRIDOR IN SURGERY FIVE--THE OPERATIONS AMPITHEATER--WHERE OBSERVERS AND A SURGICAL TEAM ARE AWAITING THE NEXT SCHEDULED PATIENT ...WHEN--
NOBODY MOVE... AND NOBODY GETS HURT!
STRAIGHT THROUGH THOSE OTHER DOORS!
--AND ONE SECOND LATER...
THE BATMAN--!?!
HOW'D HE KNOW--?!?

NO, YOU DON'T!
THIS IS MY OPERATION!
ABDOMINAL--
--SPINAL--
--AND PLASTIC SURGERY!
AND SHORTLY AFTERWARD...
NO SIGN OF THE PANEL TRUCK THAT WAS WAITING FOR THEM OUTSIDE, BATMAN!
APPARENTLY, DOCTOR, THAT BODY INTERESTS OTHERS FAR MORE THAN IT DOES YOU!
THAT MAY VERY WELL BE BASED ON YOUR INTEREST IN IT!
YOU'RE A MAGNET FOR DISASTER BATMAN! TROUBLE FOLLOWS WHEREVER YOU GO!
IT MAY LOOK THAT WAY, DOCTOR--BUT MOST OF THE TIME, I'M FOLLOWING IT!
CONTINUED ON THE PAGE FOLLOWING

WHAT TO SINK YOUR TEETH INTO WHEN YOU'RE HUNGRY AND YOU'RE NOT A WEREWOLF.

Every now and then, do you get this uncontrollable urge to bite into something that's really got some meat in it?

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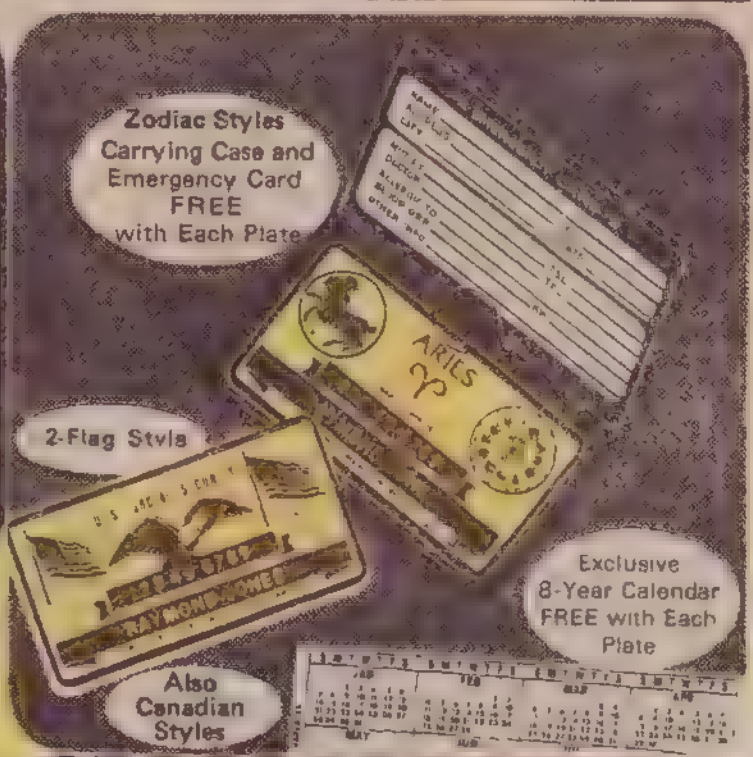

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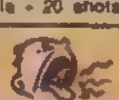

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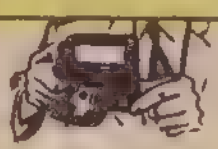

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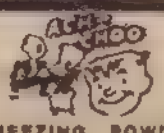

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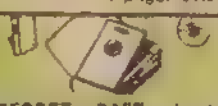

SECRET SAFE. Looks like an attractive y bound book in simulated leather, but open reveals a combination lock safe to camouflage your va u able papers, money etc 4 x 6 x 1½
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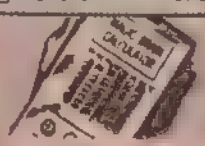

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Extra Ammo 25¢

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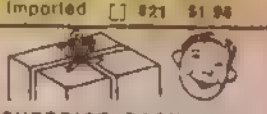

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☐ No. 816 75¢

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MAGIC SOAP POWDER Sprinkle a little of this almost invisible magic powder on any soap. When anyone uses the soap their hands and face will turn bloody red. Have fun! Drives them crazy. Harmless
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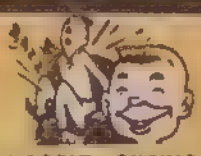

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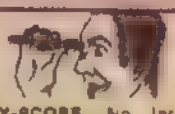

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LUCKY I WAS OUT IN THE TRUCK!
ANYWAY, YOU GOT NO WORRIES, THEY CAN'T TALK--I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS ABOUT YOU!
ALL RIGHT, WILEY, IT'S DONE WITH TOO BAD!
NOW I'VE ANOTHER JOB FOR YOU. A SOLO. SOMETHING MORE TO YOUR LIKING--WITH VERY LITTLE DANGER AND VERY BIG MONEY!
HALF AN HOUR LATER COSMO DUGGER IS ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS
MY NEED FOR A BODY KILLED AT MY HANDS IS GREATER THAN EVER!
BUT I DARE NOT PROCEED IN THE OPEN ANY LONGER!
THE VICTIM MUST BE SOMEONE WHO WILL NOT BE MISSED...WHO DIES AT THE PINNACLE OF BLISS... AND IN COMPLETE SECRECY!
BUT NOW. BEFORE I RECORD MY PLAN--
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AHHHHAHHHH.
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WHILE IN AN ADJOINING ROOM, ALFRED IS BREWING A POT OF TEA...WHEN SUDDENLY--
HEEEYAAAAHH!
GOOD HEAVENS --WHAT A SHOUT!
DO I DETECT A NOTE OF TRIUMPH--?
SUCH EXUBERANCE, SIR! GOOD NEWS, I TRUST?
GOOD? LISTEN TO THIS! I HAVE BEEN STUDYING THE UNEDITED TAPES FROM OUR LOCAL TV STATIONS OF THE THREE EVENTS WHERE THOSE STRANGELY SIMILAR DEATHS OCCURRED--

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¡GASP! THE SAME FACE!
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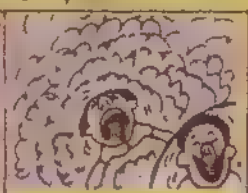

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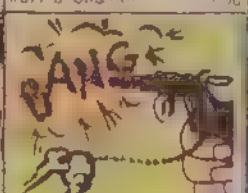

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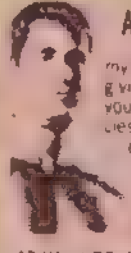

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HE INHERITED THE VANDERWYNN FORTUNE SOME TEN YEARS AGO. I HADN'T SEEN H.M SINCE.
YOU'VE BEEN VERY HELPFUL! THANK YOU AND GOOD NIGHT.
IT IS NOT YET MIDNIGHT... BUT THE BATMAN HEADS FOR HOME..
NO POINT PATROLLING TONIGHT.. MY MIND IS ELSEWHERE!
DUGGER... SKULL...DUGGER! WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?
FAR INTO THE NIGHT, HE PORES THROUGH EXTENSIVE FILES OF ESOTERIC AND CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES OF INTELLIGENCE...
NOTHING! ASIDE FROM HIS ADDRESS IN THE CITY DIRECTORY, NOT A MENTION OF COSMO DUGGER ANYWHERE!
THE NEXT DAY, THOUGH HE RESUMES THE PUBLIC IDENTITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BRUCE WAYNE, THE BATMAN'S CONCERNS DOMINATE ALL HIS THOUGHTS..
MR WAYNE, THIS CORRESPONDENCE YOUR APPOINTMENTS-->
CANCEL EVERYTHING!
FINALLY, BRUCE SURRENDERS TO THE INEVITABLE... AND DOES SOME DAYLIGHT RECONNOITERING FOR THE BATMAN...
THE VANDERWYNN MANSION IS BOARDED UP..SO DUGGER IS EVIDENTLY LIVING HERE, WHERE HE'S LISTED..
NOTHING UNUSUAL...AT LEAST FROM THE OUTSIDE...
AND BY EARLY EVENING, HE CAN SCARCELY CONTROL HIS CONSUMING IMPATIENCE...
BUT, SIR-- YOU HAVEN'T TOUCHED YOUR DINNER!
WHY, YOU DIDN'T EVEN WORK THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE IN THE TIMES!
IT DOESN'T COMPARE WITH THE PUZZLE I'M GOING TO!

SOON AFTER--ON THE ROOF OF THE DUGGER RESIDENCE-- A SHADOWY, ELUSIVE FIGURE WITH CATLIKE TREAD
NOT A LIGHT NOT A SOUND..NOT A SOUL ABOUT-- AND WHAT LOOKS LIKE A VERY CURIOUS ROOM FROM UP HERE..
AND ABSOLUTELY FASC NATING DOWN HERE!
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NOW.. PRESS SOME OF THESE...AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS!
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RETURNING IN A SINGLE MIND SHATTERING BURST OF SECONDS EVERYTHING IT HAS RECORDED!
BANG
WHAT HAPPENED? DID I HEAR IT? DID I THINK IT?-- THOUGHTS I DON'T UNDERSTAND?
BUT TOWARD THE END... THERE WAS SOMETHING--A MURDER! A PLAN FOR ANOTHER MURDER!
MY HEAD'S SPLITTING--
--MURDER! AT VANDERWYNN MANSION-- EIGHT O'CLOCK! AND IT'S ALMOST THAT NOW!
12

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SURE IS CREEPY LOOKING!
IT'S BEEN UNOCCUPIED A LONG TIME! HERE, WILEY--THIS KEY TURNS OFF THE BURGLER ALARM.. AND THIS IS FOR THE UPSTAIRS STUDY!
AND THIS, THE COMBINATION FOR THE SAFE. EASY ENOUGH?
MAYBE TOO EASY! YOU WOULDN'T BE SETTING ME UP FOR SOMETHING, WOULD YOU, MR. DUGGER?
YES--FOR THE BIGGEST HAUL OF YOUR LIFE!
YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING WORKED OUT SO NICE AND NEAT! WHAT DO YOU NEED ME FOR?
BECAUSE IF THE COMBINATION HAS BEEN CHANGED, YOU HAVE THE BEST FINGERTIPS IN THE BUSINESS!
WILEY, WHY ARE YOU OPENING THAT DOOR?
I SAID SOLO! WHO ARE THESE MEN?
BUDDIES OF MINE! YOU SEE, THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT YOU! FIRST, IT'S STEALING A BODY--NOW IT'S MONEY!
I CAN'T FIGURE YOU--SO I'M PLAYING SAFE!
THE DEAL IS OFF!
WHY, MR DUGGER, I'M SURPRISED AT YOU! HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT WHEN I'M HOLDING THESE KEYS...AND THE COMBINATION--AND THIS GUN!
SO LET'S GET GOING! AFTER YOU--!
13

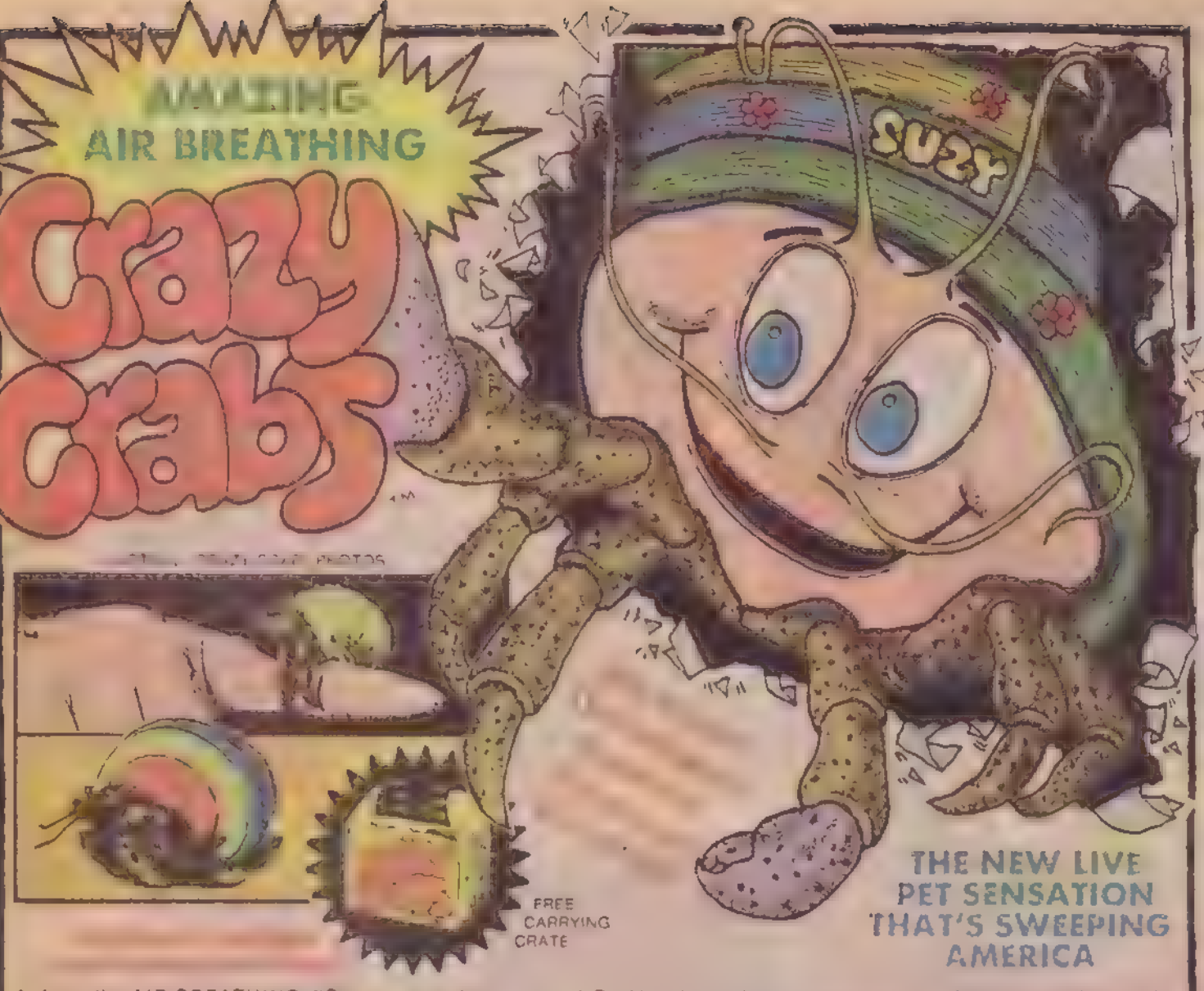
THREE MINUTES LATER--
I'VE ALMOST GOT IT! I CAN HEAR THE TUMBLERS FALLING INTO PLACE!
SUDDENLY--
ALMOST WAS THE RIGHT WORD, CREEP!
:OWW!: MY HAND-- IT FEELS AS THOUGH IT'S BROKEN!
:GROAN: THIS HAND TOO! TERRIBLE PAIN!
AND MY LEGS!
SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH ME!

EVERY MOVE I MAKE--
MY HANDS... MY HANDS... AGONY....!
UNBEARABLE!
I HAD YOU ALL WRONG DUGGER! THANKS FOR--
NEVER MIND THAT! JUST OPEN THE SAFE!
15

THE FOOL LIED TO ME ABOUT USING A DIFFERENT TRUCK! HOW ELSE COULD THE BATMAN HAVE TRAILED US HERE?
BUT I'M STILL SAFE--HE PROBABLY TOOK ME FOR ONE OF THE GANG!
ONE SECOND MORE--!
BUT THAT NEXT SECOND--
UNNNHHH!
PERFECT! I'VE GOT WHAT I CAME FOR--THE BODY OF JOE WILEY--STRUCK DOWN AT THE APEX OF HIS JOY!
SOON AFTERWARD, COSMO DUGGER IS HOME AGAIN--READY TO BEG'N HIS GHOULISH BUT IMPERATIVE SEARCH FOR THE CAUSE OF HIS PROBLEMS!
CLICK
CLICK
WHAT'S THIS?--A SKULL.. ON WILEY'S FOREHEAD!
HOW DID IT GET THERE?.. WHAT COULD HAVE DONE IT?
COULD THE SAME THING HAVE HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS TOO?
COULD THAT HAVE BEEN WHAT BROUGHT THE BATMAN TO THE MORGUE? THEN HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ON MY TRAIL!

AMAZING
AIR BREATHING

Crazy Crabs



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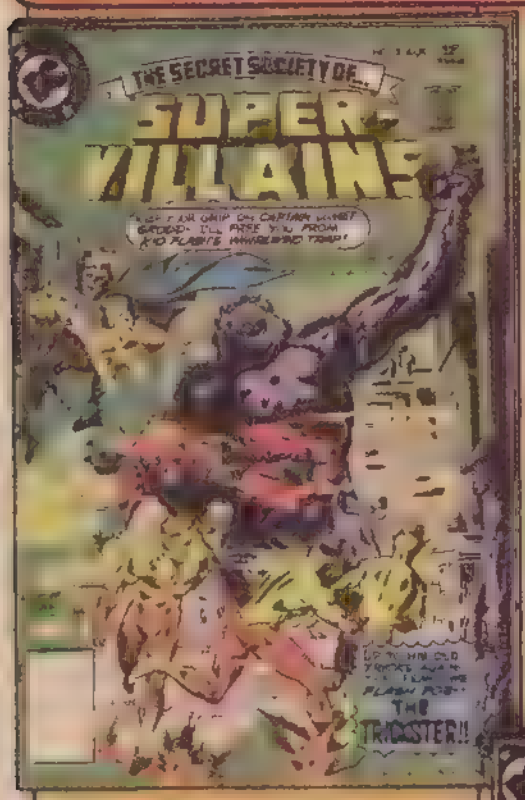

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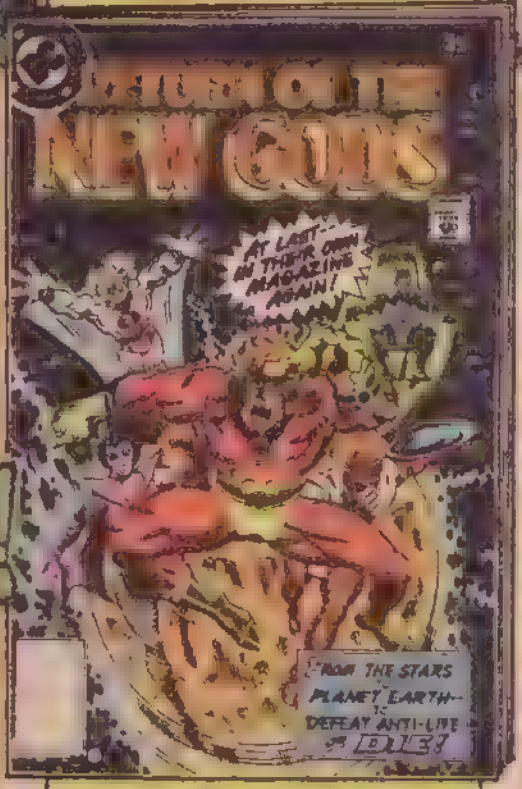

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WILL THE CRUSADERS REPLACE the FREEDOM FIGHTERS?

SHOULD THEY?

FIND OUT IN FREEDOM FIGHTERS #9 -- On Sale APRIL 12th

COMING THIS MONTH FROM DC

FEVERISHLY, HE RUNS TO HIS LABORATORY
HE WAS HERE! THERE'S NO OTHER ANSWER!
AND HE USED THE RECOGITO-- ATTACHED TO MY OTHER E-V SCOPE-- IN REVERSE!
THEY WENT OFF TOGETHER AND EXPLODED!
IT'S INCREDIBLE! ALL THAT IN ONE SHOT-- AND HE STILL FUNCTIONED! --BUT HE'S DOOMED!
ALL HIS INSTINCTIVE REFLEXES OF JOY--HAVE TURNED TO PAIN!
AND I ALONE UNDERSTAND THAT-- AND THE SURPASSING POWER IT HAS NOW GIVEN ME!
THREE HOURS LATER AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS
NO USE, COMMISSIONER! AFTER THE BATMAN CALLED US TO THE VANDERWYNN HOUSE, WE COULDN'T MAKE HEAD OR TAIL OF WHAT HE WAS SAYING
...AND THEN HE JUST STOPPED AND WENT INTO THIS...THIS SHELL!
AND THE TWO GOONS WHO WERE THERE WITH HIM WOULDN'T--
TO BLAZES WITH THEM! THE BATMAN IS ALL I CARE ABOUT!
DOCTOR, YOU'RE A POLICE SURGEON-- SURELY YOU MUST HAVE SOME IDEA OF WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM?
NONE! ALL I KNOW IS THAT HE SEEMS TO BE GROWING MORE AND MORE FEARFUL TO SAY ANYTHING...TO DO ANYTHING--TO MOVE AT ALL!
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT!
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO HOPE... AND WAIT...AND SEE..
AND THAT, READER, IS ALL WE CAN DO... UNTIL NEXT ISSUE'S : "SKULL DUGGER'S KILLJOY CAPERS!" ON SALE 2ND WEEK IN MAY!

LETTERS to the BATMAN

c/o DC COMICS, INC.
75 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

S-2601

Dear Julie,

"The Mystery of Christmas Lost" in **BATMAN #285** was an excellent holiday piece. Back in the Golden Age, fans of **Batman** could always look forward to the touching Christmas story presented each holiday season and while we can't go back, we can come close. The idea of robbing a city of Christmas sounds like something out of a children's fairy tale book, but David V. Reed makes it into a frighteningly realistic piece.

Regarding the current letter column debate: Different writers have different strengths. Denny O'Neil was best at conveying grim moods. For him, the "creature of the night" version was the only sensible choice. But David V. Reed is a different story altogether. He writes the detective script with a passion not often seen in comics. He makes **The Batman** come alive as a mercenary, who receives instead of money the grim satisfaction of a job well done. After years of crimebusting, he knows what to do more by instinct than by thought. Almost animal-like in execution, he relentlessly tracks down his prey, feeding upon the smallest of mistakes. With the powerful influence exerted by this character, is it any wonder that Bruce Wayne is one of the least utilized characters in comics today? For all intents and purposes, there is no Bruce Wayne, only **The Batman.** Any attempt to give Bruce any sort of personality falls flat since **Batman** is so unlike any real person we know. So here's my vote for Dave, because I am enjoying the revitalized adventures of the masked manhunter.

LARRY LISOWSKI
115 Southberry Lane
Levittown, NY 11756

(There's still plenty of time—and space—for the rest of you to get in your comments on which writer's version of The Batman you like best—be it Denny's, Dave's, Steve Englehart's (currently on display in DETECTIVE), or even that of —BR)

Dear Editor: * * * * *

A funny thing about human nature: People generally seem to be more inspired when they give negative criticism!

Consider me inspired.

After nearly two years of top-notch **Batman** stories, you've suddenly fallen flat on your faces. The **Dr. Tzin-Tzin** two-parter in **#'s 284** and **285** was an absolute disaster. David V. Reed's script was a real let-down; the whole plot was nothing more than **Batman** meets "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (except where **Tzin-Tzin** escapes with the help of the ants); and worst of all, we're expected to believe that a master villain like **Tzin-Tzin** will be sitting in a jail cell scratching his itchy skin till his next battle with **The Batman.** Doubtless they'll put him in a special cellblock where **Terra-Man** is nursing his saddle-sores and **Gorilla Grodd** is suffering from the heartbreak of psoriasis.

Actually, the story still could've been salvaged by the proper artist. The mystical fight scenes had some potential for weird, psychedelic interpretation. Unfortunately, Romeo Tanghal was not that artist!

STEVE SAVINO
111 Brentwood Ct
Williamsburg, VA 23185

(Readers sometimes agree—and sometimes disagree . . . but Steve above and Peter below do both!—BR)

Dear Gothamites, * * * * *

BATMAN #285 was **much** better than the preceeding issue! **Dr. Tzin-Tzin's** stunts work best when they create real spookiness through very simple means, as when his face appears within an ordinary Christmas ornament, and when another becomes a dagger that wounds **Batman** and then vanishes as if it never existed. Thus, **Batman's** final meeting with **Tzin-Tzin** is told with much more skill than their showdown last issue.

But the spectacularly fantastic, whether in the realm of science fiction or sorcery, is still out of place in **Batman's** magazine. You can turn Metropolis or Central City upside down, but **Batman's** Gotham loses credibility when all its citizens are shown being brainwashed by mystic powers. In **Batman's** dark, serious world, the idea of stealing Christmas seems very silly!

PETER SANDERSON
Rm 921 Johnson Hall, Columbia Univ.
New York, NY 10027

(And then again . . . —BR)

Dear Editor: * * * * *

After having read David V. Reed's interpretation of **The Batman** in "The Mystery of Christmas Lost", I must admit I'm quite impressed. Mr. Reed has reached the inner, more psychological part of the Cowled Crimefighter.

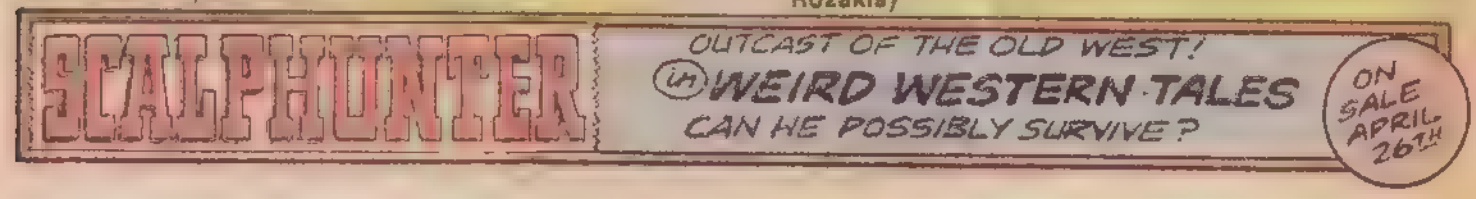
And as for **Dr. Tzin-Tzin,** I think he is the cleverest criminal ever invented in the mind of any writer—and a perfect match for **The Batman!**

MARINA KOWKABANY
1930 Meadow Ave.
Stockton, CA 95207

. . . Up until last issue, **Dr. Tzin-Tzin** was a villain no more memorable than **The Spinner.** (You don't remember **The Spinner?** Case closed!) In **#284, T-T** was given an extra dimension, a mystic quality which provided the solid base on which **#285** was built. Here we have a strikingly effective narrative highlighted by a kind of mental cat-and-mouse game between **Tzin-Tzin** and **Batman.** Both the villain's mania for mind-manipulation and the hero's remarkable powers of observation and deduction were given full rein, making the climactic confrontation at the Gotham Steam Company a true duel between masters.

ED VIA
1648 Dean Road
Roanoke, VA 24018

(No matter how you feel about him, Dr. Tzin-Tzin's gone back into retirement for awhile—but wait'll you see the bevy of baddies Dave's got lined up for the near future! Catwoman, The Joker, The Riddler—and "Where Were You the Night Batman Was Killed?"—Bob Rozakis)



DC Publishorial

"Remember the Five-Cent Phone Call?"

Lately, the staff around here has taken to calling my monthly letter The Publishorial. Or, much more often, Your Publishorial, as in "when are you finally going to have your publishorial finished so that all the books on the April schedule which are otherwise complete have a fighting chance of meeting their shipping dates?"

It is true that in an earlier column I admitted to being unduly tardy in delivering my publishorial into the clamoring hands of Jack's production room. However, you may recall that at that time I did not cop a plea.

Now, here it is, my fifth publishorial and I am late again. Only this time there is a reason, and actually an exceedingly important one that affects you directly. Let me try to explain.

Originally, I had wanted this column to burst with my enthusiasm for our new science-fiction line which opens April 21st with **The New Gods**, to be followed by **Mr. Miracle** in June, and then by David Michelinie's enthralling new creation, **Star Hunters**. I don't want to give this line short shrift, for all three of the titles are truly exceptional, both in concept and execution. However, a serious problem has cropped up, and I feel you should be apprised of it before anything else.

Several months ago, I explained that everything in a comic book—from the ads to the letters page—is completed at least three months before the comic goes on sale. Therefore, I am writing this publishorial with the knowledge that certain things which are currently the subject of open discussion may or may not be fact come April. I can't give you any conclusion, only the ins and outs of our daily fervent debate.

We are talking about raising our price from thirty to thirty-five cents. We are not talking about **if** we should, but **when.** I wish that could sound less cold than it does, but you might remember how only several months ago I explained just why a price increase was sure to be inevitable. However, I confess—I never expected that we'd be discussing it so seriously so soon.

At the time of writing, it's January. To our dismay, the New Year brought us not just new but unexpectedly high prices from the printer. Thus, we are faced with a single question: how long can we hold the line at thirty cents. March? April? Anything beyond that seems untenable.

You're reading this in April. What happened? Did you pay thirty cents for this comic book or thirty-five? What a strange business we're in. It would be nice to arrive at a package and a price that we could maintain despite the slings and arrows which have become standard operating procedure for our industry.

I guess in part, that's what Dollar Comics are all about. With a Dollar Comic you can count on getting four comics' worth of new material for four quarters for a long time to come.

And what about **New Gods?** It's terrific. Gerry Conway (writer) and Paul Levitz (editor) have added tight plotting and vivid story-telling to Jack Kirby's original vision. Don Newton's pencils are a joy. Infused with intelligence, dynamic and bold, they gleam from behind the authoritative yet faithful inks supplied by his friend, Dan Adkins.

One last thing. I imagine that many of you out there have a question or two or three or four that you'd like answered. Questions about comics, business, publishing; about management, present or long gone; about the staff; questions personal or impersonal, relevant or irreverent, questions about life, DC, eve me. Every once in a while, I'd like to turn over my publishorial to answering them. So drop us a line, when you've got the time.

Wishing all of you the very best. . .

Jenette

DC Profiles #11

Bob Haney

Bob Haney is one of those guys you build companies around. He created *Metamorpho* and co-created *The Doom Patrol*. He was the man who first coupled *The Teen Titans*. He's written everything from *Aquaman* to *The Viking Prince*, *Blackhawk* to *Rex the Wonder Dog*. And, as scripter of *The Brave and The Bold* and *World's Finest Comics*, Bob Haney has had the opportunity to write a portion of the saga of almost each and every super-hero ever published by DC Comics.

Of course, Haney's talents haven't been restricted to super-hero field. He has written reams and reams of mystery and war comics, and has dabbled in westerns and romance stories. How does a person do all of these things?

Well, growing up during the time of radio drama helps. Bob listened to the adventures of *The Shadow* and *Green Hornet* in much the same way today's future writers are reading *Superman* and *Batman*. He also grew up during the era of the great newspaper comic strips—*Prince Valiant*, *Tarzan*, *Flash Gordon* and *The Spirit* were among his favorites.

It wasn't difficult for this Philadelphia kid to move to New York and break into comics. In the late forties, there were literally dozens of publishers who needed hundreds of writers to scribe what seems like thousands of different comic books. After about five or six years in the field, Haney moved up to DC Comics, working on the war books and on the early issues of *Brave and Bold*. He's still at that latter assignment.

During the late 1960's, Bob picked up some work outside of the comic book publishing racket, having joined the writing team of the *Superman, Batman* and *Aquaman* cartoon series.

All of this is not to imply Mr. Haney's entire life revolves around comic books. Bob comes completely equipped with a wife and two children in a house in the Catskill mountains which, oddly enough, he built himself. Bob is also a skier, a carpenter and a photographer.

Bob Haney has written the vast, overwhelming majority of the 135 issues of *The Brave and The Bold* published during the past twenty-three years, which just might be some sort of record. It's only the *first* 135, Bob!

—Mike Gold

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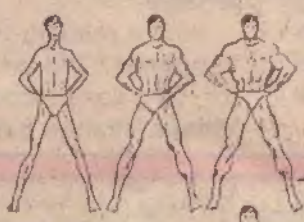

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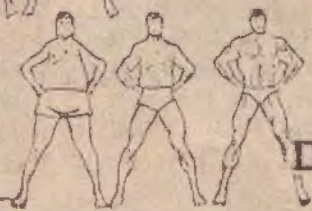

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- NYLON TRAIL TENT (FLAME RESISTANT) — Sell Only 2 Orders
- ELECTRONIC POCKET CALCULATOR — Sell Only 1 Order
- TABLE TOP POOL TABLE — Sell Only 1 Order
- WINDMILL MUSICAL JEWELRY BOX — Sell Only 1 Order
- 4-PLAYER CROQUET SET — Sell Only 1 Order
- SPALDING BALL GLOVE — Sell Only 1 Order
- SKILCRAFT CARPENTER'S CHEST — Sell Only 1 Order
- HEADPHONE RADIO — Sell Only 1 Order
- SLEEPING BAG — Sell Only 1 Order
- SKILCRAFT CHEMISTRY SET — Sell Only 1 Order
- WORLD WIDE 9-BAND RADIO — Sell Only 3 Orders
- ELECTRIC MINI ORGAN — Sell Only 1 Order
- BACK PACK BOAT — Sell Only 1 Order
- SKILCRAFT ILLUMINATED MICROSCOPE — Sell Only 1 Order
- INSTANT LOAD FLASH CAMERA OUTFIT — Sell Only 1 Order
- TESTOR'S FUNNY CAR WITH ACCESSORIES — Sell Only 1 Order

A DIVISION OF QUESTOR

SPALDING

PRESENTS

NOW IT'S MY TURN, JULIUS!
SWISH!
A 30-FOOTER!!
WHAT A MAGIC TOUCH!
YOU DON'T NEED MAGIC -JUST PRACTICE WITH A SPALDING AUTOGRAPH BALL. IT'S GOT A RUBBER COVER SO YOU CAN REALLY GET A GRIP ON IT.

"IF YOU WANT THE BALL WITH THE SURE-HANDED FEEL, LOOK FOR OUR SIGNATURES AT YOUR SPORTING GOODS DEALER. OTHER AUTOGRAPH BALLS ARE SIGNED BY WILT CHAMBERLAIN, 'PISTOL PETE' AND 'ERNIE D.'"